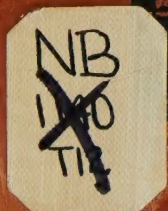


READING WITH A PURPOSE

The Appreciation of Sculpture

LORADO TAFT



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Reading with a Purpose



THE APPRECIATION
OF SCULPTURE

By

LORADO TAFT



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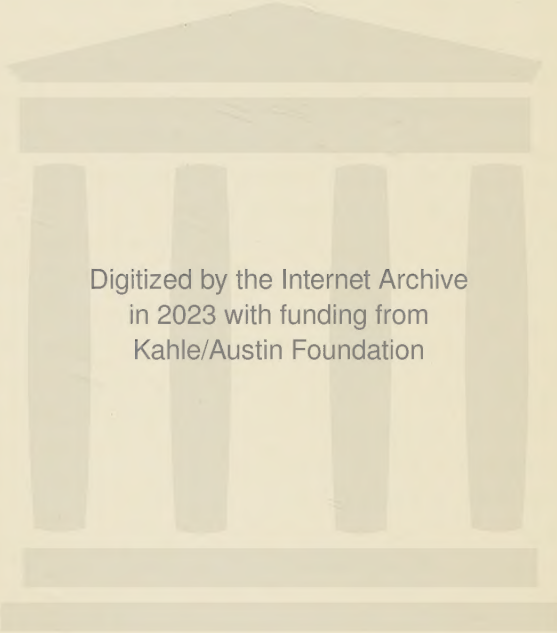
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WHY THIS COURSE IS PUBLISHED

THIS course has been prepared for men and women who wish to be better equipped to enjoy sculpture. It comprises a very brief introduction to the subject and a guide to a few readable books. The books are arranged for consecutive reading. They should be available in any general library, or may be obtained through any good book store.

A finer understanding and appreciation of sculpture should come to anyone who follows through the course of reading suggested in this booklet. If you wish to pursue the subject further the librarian of your Public Library will be glad to make suggestions. If you desire to increase your knowledge in other fields, you are referred to the other courses in this Reading with a Purpose series and to your Public Library.

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THE AUTHOR

LORADO TAFT, *the well-known Chicago sculptor, feels that his work is two-fold. Opening, in 1886, his modest studio in the western metropolis, he soon found himself compelled, through the exigencies of his location, to become an evangelist as well as a creator. "Great art demands passionate appreciation," and the young man set himself to the task of awakening appreciation in his countrymen, especially the appreciation of sculpture.*

Thus, while the products of Mr. Taft's professional work are found in many of our cities from Washington, D. C., to Seattle, his lectures have been even more widely distributed. He has given his demonstration, "In a Sculptor's Studio" over fifteen hundred times, and in practically every state in the Union. His courses at the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois are invariably crowded, while recent seasons have brought him enthusiastic welcome at Yale University and other eastern institutions of learning.

Mr. Taft has written much; his HISTORY OF AMERICAN SCULPTURE is the standard work on the subject and is in all libraries. His enthusiasm is perennial, his friendliness never failing. One of his chief pleasures is discovering new talent and helping beginners.

THE APPRECIATION OF SCULPTURE

DID you ever find yourself unexpectedly in the presence of Saint-Gaudens' great statue of Lincoln in Lincoln Park, Chicago? Did you ever try to analyze the emotions which that mighty figure compels within the most casual spectator? Why is it more impressive than any painting of Lincoln that you have ever seen? More vital than any description? Lincoln stands there as though just arisen from the chair of state. His massive head is bowed in thought. His giant form and broad shoulders betray no weakness. The silhouette of the statue is amazingly compact, for the sculptor has lifted the left hand to grasp the coat lapel, while the right, at arm's length, is concealed behind the figure as if about to swing forward in a commanding gesture. What do you know about this work? You have heard that it is considered the greatest portrait statue in America—that Saint-Gaudens was our most famous sculptor—that he received forty thousand dollars for it—that it was erected forty years ago—that someone has said of it: "A combination of strength and tenderness; the greatest thing possible in art as in life." You know

that all cultured visitors to Chicago make a pilgrimage to it as to the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield—that the colored people decorate it every year in reverent tribute to the Great Emancipator. Such fragments of memories and associations flit through the mind when one contemplates this monument; how many of them have to do with the thrill of emotion which it awakens if you but give it opportunity?

Enjoyment is largely a matter of association; the more points of contact you have with a great work of art the better for you. I know that there is a group of writers who decry the human side of art and even of history. One young teacher solemnly assured me the other day that the time was past when the historian was interested “in the color of a man’s necktie or how he walked.” I must confess that I am old-fashioned enough to wish to know what manner of man it was who created the work which I find myself admiring. I want to know the time that he lived in; the place that he made the statue for. I am even pleased to learn that, like the yellow-taxi drivers, he was “good to his mother”! Michelangelo’s monuments to the Medici are no better sculpture, perhaps, but are immeasurably more interesting to me, since I have read the story of tumult and tragedy which gave them birth. Think of this passionate, liberty-loving Florentine bound by ties of gratitude to the house of the Medici but compelled

in his old age to serve and glorify a miserable tyrant of that name, a profligate whose whole purpose was to enslave the freemen of his city! Was ever Greek drama charged with deeper poignancy than is this theme? Does not the long martyrdom help to explain the violence and agonized protest of those marble giants? They are great sculptures, however, whether or not we may have heard of Lorenzo the Magnificent or of Alessandro the Despicable or even of Michelangelo. The story is not everything. There are principles underlying the venerable art of sculpture, just as you will find them underneath the towering masterpieces of drama, of poetry, of music and of painting. All are securely founded upon rules of good craftsmanship; of proportion and harmony.

SCULPTURE IN MUSEUMS

Two good and sufficient reasons there are why most Americans do not care for sculpture. Step into any museum with me and I will illustrate the two reasons. Perhaps we have already discovered a third in the fact that we have to go to the museum to find our sculpture. It may be that this unfamiliarity which compels us to go out of our way to see it should stand first of all among the reasons for our indifference.

To be sure we may collide on our journey with a tasteless soldier-monument or the dusty effigy of a

one-time "leading citizen." They are repellent and out of place. Decidedly you do not care for sculpture!

We enter the museum. Before you is spread the wreckage of the centuries, verily a battlefield covered with fragments of once glorious creations; heads without noses and bodies without heads; broken reliefs and rusty bronzes. Worse yet, even when the figures and reliefs are complete, they are so lonesome, so pitifully conscious of being wrested from their original surroundings that they are quite unintelligible. They have lost their significance. Rows of them; shelves of them, all caged like clipt eagles at the "Zoo." Of course we have but few ancient originals of value. These are not for us; we must go abroad to see them. Our directors do the best they can in "combing" all European junk shops for chips and shreds of curiosities. Meantime the true masterpieces of the past—the accumulated treasures of the world—must be represented by plaster casts. This is not so unfortunate after all, since a plaster cast may be a perfect reproduction of the form and even of the color of the original.

The other reason is that much of our sculpture is hideous. Not only does this jumble of dissociated and unintelligible objects result in confusion of mind, but it is a fact that to the uninitiated these things have no beauty. Meaningless ugliness is what they

spell to the crowd. Soiled casts, poorly lighted, are so disagreeable and so conspicuous that the management, at last, in desperation, hides them in basement or attic storeroom. Our museums are ashamed of their plaster casts and are trying to get rid of them. It is a great pity, for, if well cleaned and intelligently illuminated, those same pariahs, these leprous beggars, might come again into their own and form the chief treasure of the collection, precious and exalted in their beauty. It is largely a question of lighting, to which no one pays any attention. Properly placed, an electric bulb at an expense of a fraction of one cent an hour is capable of transfiguring a good cast. It will change a "dead loss" into a radiant asset.

ART THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD

We Americans think of art as a pretty and an amusing thing, but after all a superficial matter. It should be a part of our religion. It ennobles life and helps to explain it. The thing which separates us from our brother animals is the fact that we can send messages on down through the generations. Animals provide instinctively for their offspring, but who ever heard of a dog or cat caring much about its grandchildren? We do that. We can send greetings to a world unborn. We can think back through the ages and be grateful to those who have

wrought for us. The means by which this is done is art. Yes, through poetry and painting and sculpture, life begins to explain itself. We do not know what it is all about, this mortal existence, but we know that it becomes reasonable if there is some small gain with each generation. The thing most precious, the highest ideal, man has always embodied in the form of art and transmitted with his love to those coming after. Hence it is that little lands which all together would not fill one of our states, countries like Greece or Palestine, loom large in the past. They have bequeathed to us their treasures, while other enormous territories are forgotten because they did nothing for us. Yes, those little countries created, and we have "entered into their labors." Would we call ourselves civilized, we too must cultivate this precious thing which expresses the lives of men and transmits beauty to other generations. "Art is the ark of the covenant in which all ideals of beauty and excellence are carried before the race."

AMERICAN NEGLECT OF ART

As Americans we have a perfect and inalienable right to our ignorance. Our title to national indifference is one of long standing. Our ancestors here in this land were without sculptural tradition. Generally of humble origin, they had the prejudices of their class and seem to have attributed all of the

arts to the Devil. One dallied with them at his peril! To the Pilgrim Fathers the churchly decorations were especially anathema, for they represented popery and idolatry. Their brothers in England delighted in breaking the cathedral statuary, in burning religious paintings. Of course they suppressed the drama and countenanced only the most doleful music. Whether or not the world was to them a vale of tears, art was certainly viewed as a temptation and a foe to be strenuously resisted.

It would have been surprising, then, if stock of this character, transplanted to a bleak and inhospitable shore, should have produced any works of beauty. Talent there may have been, but no favoring sunshine ever warmed it into life. It was many a year before even portrait painting was indulged in, while two whole centuries passed before a sculptor appeared.

We have made great progress in the last hundred years but, with all our getting, this opulent western country still lacks certain things. We lack the historic background which makes the old world so interesting to the traveler. We lack the European traditions of beauty, the accumulated inheritance of artistry, product of immemorial efforts to adorn. We lack the joy of creating, the habit of the handicrafts, which opens the way to mightier achievements—which makes great art possible.

WITHOUT APPRECIATION GREAT ART IS IMPOSSIBLE

It is simply out of the question that a towering master should appear in our midst under present conditions. How do they come? Always uplifted by a group of colleagues. Donatello was but a glorified workman, one of a fellowship of clever stonecutters. When he developed a skill superior to their own, they were there to appreciate and applaud what he did. They hailed him as their leader. It was an honor which meant something! To have art in this country there must be an artistic atmosphere; there must be thousands of skilful hands—thousands of craftsmen who are able to recognize and appreciate triumphs of artistry. Walt Whitman wrote: "To have great poetry you must have great audiences too." The same thought is developed by another who truly says: "Great art demands passionate appreciation." In other words you cannot hope to have the art unless appreciation welcomes it; but how are we to develop appreciation without the art which cultivates it? It is a vicious circle, you see, almost as hopeless as the old conundrum of the country groceries, "Which came first, the hen or the egg?" The answer, I believe, has never been definitely determined by either the biologists or the village wiseacres, but one thing is certain: you cannot start a successful poultry farm with neither hen nor eggs! That is the difficulty here in regard to art. We are

doing well, we think—as well as some other lands—but the fact is we are not vitally interested in the most important thing of all, the creation of an ideal civilization. How few of us use our hands skilfully; how few care to. One of our leading educators tells us that the tacit implication in most of our schools is: “Now, Johnny, study hard so that you won’t have to work when you are grown up.” This attitude is unfortunate in more ways than one. It tends to separate us into classes. When the ambition of half of our people is to avoid work with the hands—when they despise those who have to work—it is indeed a dangerous time for democracy.

A NEW WORLD TO LIVE IN

In his admirable booklet of this series, *Ears to hear*, Dr. Mason points out that it is the answer of the mind to the organs of sense that determines the universe in which we live. One of the James brothers, William or Henry, wrote in an early letter: “After all it is the amount of life a man feels that makes you respect him.” Someone else has said: “The highest achievement possible in life is the making of a personality.” Here, then, is a job at which we may busy ourselves all the time. We can work at it every moment of our lives, awake or sleeping, for consciously or unconsciously we are always developing personality. What an astonishing thought it

is! Of course one must use discrimination. Some personalities are best developed by judicious curbing. A *débutante*, endeavoring to make conversation with a slow young man, exclaimed: "I like people to be natural, don't you?" "Well," he replied doubtfully, "it depends somewhat upon their natures." So developing personality does not mean letting one's self go completely with every impulse of youth—or of age, for that matter—unrestrained. It is something that requires a great deal of thought. When we realize how much most of us are missing of all that is exalted or noble, we have reason to mourn.

A little incident comes to me out of the long ago. A group of us artists were working in a summer camp. It was our habit to gather toward night on the bank of our lake and enjoy together the pageant of the sunset. One evening as we stood there the little nursemaid whom we had employed whispered to my wife, asking if she might run home, a short distance down the road, and "show the sunset" to her people. "Certainly," said my wife, "but they will see it, won't they?" "No," was the eager reply; "I never saw the sunset until you came." All of us are missing too many sunsets—too many of the good things of life. I hear people talk of the "dreadful dullness of life"—of "fretting themselves into resignation!" "Life at its best is a dreary thing,"

says one of our noted lawyers. How do they get that way? I like better the words of one of our great educators who with beaming face tells us of "the romantic, the joyous, adventure of learning." I think it was Ruskin who wrote so eloquently: "The eternal court is open unto you with its society, wide as the world, multitudinous as its days; the chosen and the mighty of every place and time." We are entitled to their companionship if only we will claim it. We have a right to all of the beauty around us and to all that has come down to us from the past. It is ours to have and to hold and to enjoy—if we but open our eyes to it. Says Elihu Root: "The greatest happiness in life comes from things not material. It does not come from eating and drinking and wearing fine clothes; it comes from elevation of character, from love of beauty gratified, from the many influences that ennoble mankind. I think we have no higher duty than to promote the opening to Americans of every opportunity to secure these means of happiness."

I love too those words of Dr. Edward Robinson: "Happily possession is not necessary for enjoyment. The real possession is the ability to appreciate. Equipped with this, our travels abroad and our leisure hours at home can be made ten times more profitable than they are without it, and the profit is gained through pure enjoyment of the highest kind."

Dr. Robinson concludes his article with this significant thought: "Competent men in the various arts America has in abundance. What we need to produce is the intelligent layman, with whom they can co-operate in sympathy. When we have that combination we may hope to achieve what Macaulay had in mind, in saying of the typical public man of the Italian Renaissance, that the fine arts profited alike by the severity of his judgment, and by the liberality of his patronage."

There is inspiration in the thought that in learning to enjoy good art we are actually making ourselves better citizens and contributing to the welfare and advancement of the land that we love. And then when unusual talent appears unheralded we shall be able to recognize and protect it—perhaps the greatest privilege of all.

WHAT IS APPRECIATION?

There are many ways of "appreciating" sculpture. "One may classify Greek marbles as dispassionately as he would beetles and presumably obtain in both instances the same intellectual pleasure." Sculpture may be used by the historian as a side-light on history. Often it is all that remains. Some see in it only nudity; others love it for its chaste aloofness. One admires the perfection of drawing; another gloats over the play of light and shade. Here

is a devotee of realism whose ideal sculpture approaches taxidermy in its dry statement of facts; another cares only for naïveté and haunts collections of primitive art with their rows of grinning boot-jacks, or writes rhapsodies on Brancusi's ecstatic embrace of two brickbats. All of these are forms of appreciation—glimpses of the light. Too bad that as a rule they are more or less mutually exclusive, but that is the way we are built; the creator has provided that we shall not "become as gods"! The wisest man that I have ever known, the author whom on the whole I have found the most satisfying, tells me everything about a certain masterpiece excepting why it is *great sculpture*. I ask for this and he warns me that I am interested in mere technicalities; that the message of great art is vastly more important than studio-talk about it. Agreed; but one could wish that there were readable books upon sculpture *as* sculpture. They are still to be written. Meantime there are fascinating works on the history of sculpture. I even enjoy the apocryphal tales of Vasari and the bombastic egoism of Cellini—especially since I find that I can read these books in the quaint originals.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF SCULPTURE

Some people have an instinctive "taste" for sculpture—generally bad sculpture. They "know what

they like" and "always did prefer statuary to painting." Supposing, just for fun, that you have this mild, apologetic liking for sculpture—you are not entirely alone; such persons are met occasionally even in America!—did you ever stop to think what kind of sculpture it is that you like? Do you prefer it massive or "shredded"? Violent or restful? Crude or exquisite? Obvious or occult? Served with, or without, color? Whatever your answer, you are quite right; you have excellent authorities for your choice, and strong historical precedent as well. Great peoples in vast periods of time have liked and produced the very kind of sculpture which you name. Fortunately, however, it is no more necessary to limit your enjoyment to any one of these expressions than it is obligatory to eat a single kind of food or to enjoy but one species of flower. If I find myself inclining more and more toward the simple and massive, it may be because an artist's tastes are inevitably shaped by his personal limitations. My clumsy hands could never grope to MacMonnies' ideals of refinement. Youth, of course, has no limitations, or is not aware of them, which comes to the same thing. You, my reader, are as free as youth; you have no desire to become a sculptor, and need fear no limitations.

A potent factor in appreciation is a conviction or principle, by means of which all works of art are

unceasingly measured. Get a notion, for instance, that the ideal sculpture is that which is carved, carved in marble or stone; then add the conviction that the greatest asset of this beautiful carving is its permanence—its “hint of eternity”—and you perceive at once how your judgments must continually progress and strengthen. Of course one begins by loving intricacy. You want your money’s worth of hard work! A great many never advance beyond Canova’s “Cupid and Psyche,” with all those fragile wings and arms in readiness for the housemaid’s duster. A hundred would buy this simpering little group to one who would consider Michelangelo’s “Lorenzo.” These two works represent the antipodes of sculptural ideals. The one was sculpture “by first intention”; the other, in spite of all the toil expended upon it, is, and always was, insignificant.

The “significance” of sculpture—there’s the rub! Sometimes the artist’s intention is obvious, but frequently he has no message beyond the joy of creation, the pleasure in suave form and graceful composition. This is excuse enough for the work, but if you do not understand sculptural composition, if you feel no response to those happy interblendings of light and shade, those gentle gradations, the imagined touch, in short if you do not know the language of sculpture, how can you hope to grasp the meaning of the work? My professorial friend will say that

if a work have no significance beyond the sculptor's skill it is of little value and your loss is not great. But I vow there is often a beauty, a mastery in a little fragment of Greek carving which is capable of giving one a thrill as exalted as that awakened by the most exquisite musical harmony. One need not know whence came this waif, of what figure it formed a part; it is perfect in itself.

AN EXPERIMENT IN SCULPTURE

The words which I have just written drive me to a confession. To be really honest, it may as well be acknowledged right here that the best way to learn to appreciate sculpture is not to read about it, but to *try to do it*. It is worth the effort. You may find that you have a knack for modeling and you have opened up a whole world of joyous adventure. More likely you will promptly report that you "can't do a thing with it," but even then you will have learned something—how difficult it is, and much more! Understand, it is not a course in a life-class which is recommended. What I have in mind is something like Mr. Bailey's¹ suggestion about making diagrams of pictures, a most elementary process. I have often thought how valuable this would be to the teacher of art history. If he would take a bar

¹Bailey, Henry Turner. *Pleasure from pictures*. A. L. A., 1926.

of Ivory soap and whittle out the general pose and proportions of one of Donatello's earliest "Prophets," and then try to fit into his little soap figure the swaggering marble "David," he would find the poses almost identical and would realize how in a few years the original conception had developed and grown strong. Such an experience is most illuminating. He will have learned something of the flowering of Donatello's genius which no book nor lecture could give him. "Appreciate by participation" is a good watchword. Other bars of soap might well be sacrificed to the "Saint George" and the "Zuccone." No photographs, nor even repeated sketches, can possibly convey the structure of these magnificent things so well as this little experiment in the round. Try it and see.

To get the real sense of the planes, start always with a solid mass and carve; do not build up, as one usually models. Try to summarize, in this way, Michelangelo's "Dying Slaves" and the figures of the Medici tombs, and see what wonders you will discover. It is only the work of the great masters which will reward such approach; many delightful statues by lesser artists seem to lose their structure—where they have any—in an intricacy of disconcerting details. But I am vigorously reminded at this point that I was employed to write a reading course and not to advertise Ivory soap!

SCULPTURAL CONVENTIONS

The ages have produced so many kinds of sculpture that it seems rather hopeless to attempt a definition of the art, or even to say what is legitimate sculpture and what is not. Yet we are constantly making our choice, and people will always do so, whether or no they have any "principles." Perhaps we may be able to build up a confession of faith by merely taking note of our preferences.

Let us see first what we think of "realism." Supposing I modeled a soldier and put a real gun in his hands or gave my bronze officer a sword so sharp that it would cut? Most of my readers would feel at once that there was something wrong here, something incongruous. Every now and then a beginner does this very thing—arms his statue with real weapons or with accurate *representations* of weapons. It makes us uneasy, but we cannot quite define our objection. When such realism is carried to the attire and surroundings we say that the result is "wax-work," suitable for a museum of ethnology or a show-window, but not for sculpture. Real hair, real clothing is not sculpture; but no more is a deceptive copy of these attributes of humanity to be considered sculpture. A little thought and observation will convince one that sculpture is not reality, nor even the appearance of it, but is a translation from nature into another language and that this translation must

vary in method according to material employed. Granite, marble, wood, terra-cotta and bronze all require a different technique. Hair and drapery must obviously be conventionalized in all of these mediums and no two of them demand precisely the same handling.

It is possible to cast in bronze or silver an edge of drapery as thin as real cloth, but the sculptor has no desire to do this; he makes his edges several times thicker than real drapery. This is his sculptural convention. He might use real buttons, but he prefers to sketch cruder ones, perhaps in a little lower relief than the original, in order to establish to all observers that these are not real buttons.

On the Boulevard St-Germain in Paris stands a monument to a man who apparently invented a form of railway signal. A small model of a semaphore held in the hand of the statue or outlined in relief on the pedestal would have conveyed the idea and would have been in much better taste, but the sculptor must needs put up the entire contrivance, full size, in bronze, above the head of the proud inventor. The silhouette is ragged and ugly in the extreme and does not improve upon approach. A figure of a man in an old-time pillory would be vastly more artistic as well as more entertaining! In San Francisco is a strange fountain consisting in part of an immense bronze trip-hammer manned by a group of

naked laborers. It is one of the most unhappy monuments in America, but finds close rivals in many another filled with realistic cogwheels, farm implements, automobile "parts" and aeroplane accessories. No "practicable" machinery has any place in sculpture.

Another convention of the art is that which pertains to the wholeness or "integrity" of mass. Rodin once quoted to the writer a counsel of Michelangelo to make a group or figure so solid and simple that it could be rolled down hill without breaking anything off. This may be a little extreme, but the advice is good to remember. Many European memorials would be improved by the test! Someone has said that "the greatest asset of monumental sculpture is its hint of eternity." Egyptian sculpture, like the Sphinx and Memnon statues, have this impressive quality, but so, likewise, have the great works of Donatello, Della Quercia and Michelangelo. These masters not only respected their material and left their work strong, but added still further to the look of solidity by cutting certain depths only part way. Their compositions show no black holes, but delicate half-tones which make for unity and a sense of mass. One of my pupils used to talk of filling dark cavities with "chunks of atmosphere." It does not matter what you call it, good sculpture will have many such fillings and the best has a veil of "atmosphere"

throughout. A comparison of the "Hermes" of Praxiteles with even the finest of Roman copies will show you what I mean.

A third convention is found in the mysterious subject of "planes." To the sculptor engaged in creation all surfaces are made up of facets. This is the way in which he sees things. Were he to leave his masses unfinished you might call him a "cubist," for the interrupted result of his progress suggests a kind of crystallization. Each plane is a summary of the general slope of an area; its boundaries might be termed "watersheds"; that is, the junctions of two slopes. In a low relief the sculptor amplifies those planes which one looks upon squarely and minimizes the disappearing planes. The surface becomes broad and "white," the shadows being reduced to mere accents. A globe in sunlight is largely shadow and obviously will not "carry" as far as a disk of the same size. Thus for legibility of pattern, globes and other solids are always flattened in relief and a larger surface exposed to the light. Acting on this principle many great sculptors give a kind of low-relief treatment to all planes which they wish to emphasize. Drapery and other details are kept "white" instead of being cut up as in nature. Donatello did this constantly in his more important works, especially those to be seen from a distance. Notice the drapery of his dancing children and the refined

detail of the armor of his equestrian "Gattamelata." The form of the body is distinctly revealed; the mass dominates; and yet we have here the charm of most subtle light and shade. Rodin once talked at great length of how he "amplified the planes" of even his nude figures, but the translator of the interview rendered "planes" into "plans," which was of course quite unintelligible—one did not know whether he was talking of "ground-plans" or of aspirations for the future!

The carvers of the cathedrals, whom Rodin so greatly admired, were very expert in these modifications. Every surface was to them a trap to catch the light or a shadow to enhance the effect. Their statues were carved in place and the soft stone invited all kinds of experiments. Near at hand a figure might look rough and formless, but from the ground it glowed and sparkled against the sky, simple in contour and rich in light and shade. The distance clothed it likewise in the sheen of atmosphere with which the Greeks strove so diligently to envelop their statues.

Thus it will be seen that sculpture, although so tangible, is quite as much a convention as is painting, and frequently more so. We say glibly that "painting is a symbol, but sculpture is the real thing." It seems easy—like starting to learn Italian—but presently one finds it not nearly so simple. A pre-

cise copy of nature is the last thing in the world to be desired. A photograph or a life-mask can do all of that. Sculpture is an abstraction.

Do not misunderstand me and go to the other extreme! There is today a whole army of young people—and many others old enough to know better—who are producing sculpture more hideous and tortured than the world has ever seen. It is their great resolve to avoid both the academic and the realistic phases of art. They are certainly succeeding, but what is it that they offer us? Untrained and lawless, they pour out a stream of unmeaning deformities showing neither structure nor composition, much less beauty. The worst of it is that hired “art-critics” praise these things to the utter confusion of the public, while dealers display them and even sell them.

THE HISTORICAL APPROACH

The history of sculpture is the story of mankind; it tells the tale of humanity’s highest ambitions; of its cherished ideals and of its proudest achievements. The Egyptians thought to “save their souls” by perfection of portraiture and carved images of wood which even today startle us with their lifelike vividness. At the same time they chiseled in hardest rock the forms of gods and kings, and detailed in endless reliefs their ceremonial worship and their triumphs.

Babylon and Assyria record the incredible cruelties of conquering monarchs, but of even earlier date are the sculptured advertisements of a peaceful dairy farm in Ur of the Chaldees with glimpses of "contented cows" and cans of certified milk!

Perhaps the old-time Greeks were the most intelligent and the best balanced of all mankind. In poetry, in drama, in philosophy, they set the pace for the entire world. In the perfection of their architecture and sculpture they have never been approached. It is one of the marvels of history that this small tumultuous nation should have paused long enough in its struggles to produce the Parthenon; that in a brief one hundred and fifty years they developed sculpture from the crude, slab-sided "Apollos" and newel-post "Heras" to the majestic art of Phidias. The fragments of the sculptures of the Parthenon are the finest things that we possess. That east pediment is the greatest dream ever made real by mortal hand. To know it is like knowing the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; it is a liberal education and throws light upon any other work which one may study.

Another century and we have the grace and the exquisite perfection of Praxiteles. His sunny reveries found fit contrast in the tragic ideals of Scopas, whose famous works have been swept from the earth by war and devastation. Lysippos, the favorite sculptor of Alexander the Great, enjoyed unusual op-

portunity and his influence continued for centuries in the widened horizons of Hellenistic art. The conquering hosts of the Macedonian kindled new fires of Greek culture in distant lands; particularly in Egypt and in Asia Minor were they followed by an exuberant development of sculpture. Asked to whom he bequeathed his empire, the dying Alexander is said to have murmured: "To the strongest," and immediately the struggle was on. The glorious "Winged Victory of Samothrace" commemorates the triumph of one of these generals over another. It is a military memorial; a comparison with our own war monuments gives one a new thought regarding our progress in civilization!

"I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," wrote the evangelist to the Church of Pergamos. Today we know what was meant by "Satan's seat." We have the remains of the grandest altar ever conceived, a shrine dedicated to all the gods of Greece, but carved by wonder-working hands in an upstart city across the Aegean Sea. Closely related in dramatic intensity is the famous Laocoön group of the same period. The regal "Venus of Melos" and the "Apollo Belvedere" were likewise products of the mellow autumn days of Greek art when the shadow of a great change was already apparent in the West.

The early Romans seem to have possessed many

traits in common with our own American pioneers. They were exceedingly busy and had little time or disposition for the amenities. "Leave to the Greek his marble dolls and scrolls of wordy lore" was the way one of their own poets put it. Their job was to make roads and to govern the world! But later, with wealth and power, they turned to more sumptuous building. Sculpture, especially portraiture, was encouraged for a space as never before in the history of civilization. Then in the fulness of time there came a day when Roman banners ceased to flutter and Roman eagles no longer gleamed afield. There were no more stately arches to be erected, no more statues of conquerors. Most appropriately sculpture's final expression was in the form of magnificent burial cases. Yes, Roman art made itself an elaborate coffin, crept in and pulled down the lid for a good long sleep—a slumber of a thousand years.

THE RENAISSANCE

Now we show you a miracle; how came the awakening with its new life of marvelous beauty and vigor. The marble sarcophagus is transformed into a cradle and the wonder of the Renaissance springs from it. The great awakening did not take place in imperial Rome, nor in fair Florence; the magic box was in ancient Pisa, down by the sea. A certain architect there, named Niccola, was commissioned to design

and build a marble pulpit for the fine new Baptistery of his city. Dissatisfied with the efforts of his carvers he undertook to do the work himself, and in the reliefs of an old Roman sarcophagus found his model and inspiration. The splendid pulpit was completed in 1260, and its success was so great that Niccola and his pupils were summoned in all directions for similar works. In Siena, Bologna, Perugia and Pistoja we find them carefully executing pulpits, shrines, fountains and tombs which today are still among the chief treasures of these cities.

Dante was born in 1265; his friend Giotto in 1276. Giotto and Niccola's pupil, Andrea of Pisa, collaborated on the Campanile of Florence. And thus sculpture was brought to Florence, where it was to find the most favorable conditions that it had known since the old Athenian days. Andrea's bronze doors for the Baptistery were completed in 1336 and were the direct inspiration of the "Gates of Paradise" upon which Ghiberti spent his life a century later. Meantime Siena had given birth and education to an unaccountable genius, Jacopo della Quercia, whose scattered works are the pride of his native city, as of Lucca and Bologna.

In Donatello we find one of sculpture's greatest heroes, a joyous spirit who adventured with enthusiasm in many paths. He began most fortunately as a marble cutter of large figures, but he worked in

various materials and excelled particularly in low relief. He made the first "serious nude" of the Renaissance and the first equestrian statue since the Romans. His love for classic art was equaled by his devotion to nature. It was this sane balance which made him the acknowledged leader of his time, setting an example which did much to counteract the Florentine tendency toward picturesque sculpture. The most renowned of his statues is his "Saint George."

One of Donatello's greatest colleagues was Luca della Robbia, whose ideal was a sweet serenity which is almost Greek. Luca's success in glazing terracotta enabled him to multiply his beautiful works. All of these masters had their apprentices, some of whom became famous in turn and left a wealth of beautiful things. You will enjoy meeting these men personally; the more you know about them the more interesting do they become. Admirable citizens, too, were most of them, leading quiet, pious lives in a period of much turbulence, cruelty and superstition. Truly of them it may be said in the words of sacred writ: "And the handiwork of their craft is their prayer."

Now, finally, appears the amazing figure which . . . "crowns the Renaissance as his dome crowns Saint Peter's." It has been said that "Jacopo della Quercia had but one pupil and he had to wait a hundred years for him." Michelangelo's obligation to

the gifted Sienese is obvious. To him, to Donatello, and to Signorelli, the painter, he owed everything, and yet the sum-total of their spiritual ancestry does not account for the genius of Michelangelo. No one can read the story of his life and struggles and accomplishment without having a more exalted sense of the potentialities of the human mind.

THE STORY OF FRENCH SCULPTURE

Another alluring field is French sculpture, which for several centuries paralleled the later development of classic art. The French have long claimed to be the most artistic nation of Europe. Art is to them more than a mere decoration of life; it is life itself. Ever since the days of the cathedral builders this busy people has steadily designed and painted and carved until France has become supremely rich in works of beauty—the record and heritage of an extraordinary race.

During the reign of Philip Augustus (1180-1223) there swept over France a mighty wave of religious enthusiasm which found expression in the building of churches and cathedrals. Out of the sturdy Romanesque vaulting had just been developed the nervous and highly ingenious form of construction which we call the Gothic style, a method of building at once flexible and capable of the loftiest dignity. The country was ready for it. Never in the world's

history has there been such an example of community enterprise as during the century which gave birth to the cathedrals of Chartres, Paris, Bourges, Amiens and Reims and scores of others ranging from near-rivals of these queenly structures down to the village chapels and wayside shrines. The Romanesque churches had been built by the clergy; these "white miracles in stone" were the work of the people, every man, woman and child uniting in an exalted effort to create something beautiful to the glory of God, and incidentally, to the renown of the home city.

The pageant of the ages continues to unroll before our eyes, but the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries bring a great change in its stage settings. This time the impulse was from without. That mighty unrest of the human intellect which we call the Renaissance was not limited to the land which gave it birth; every shore was touched and fertilized in some degree by its widening waves. France in particular responded with eager enthusiasm to the mellow call of the south-land. Charles VIII, Louis XII, Francis I and Henry II were all attracted in one way or another by Italy. Their armies were continually on the march, invading and returning home for repairs. For long years the two countries kept up an interchange of broken skulls and "egg-and-dart" ornaments. You may well imagine that the art of France was profoundly affected thereby. For a time structures essentially

Gothic masqueraded under classic decorations but presently these mongrels gave way to the new and sumptuous "French Renaissance" châteaux with which Francis and Henry, most indefatigable builders, now adorned their royal estates. In sculpture Jean Goujon and Germain Pilon are the great names of the sixteenth century, as in the seventeenth we find Puget, Coysevox, and Girardon, facile eulogists of Louis XIV. The eighteenth century offers talent without limit, but the supreme renown is that of Houdon.

The nineteenth century made Paris the most beautiful capital in the world. Boulevards were cut through congested quarters and parks opened; monuments and fountains were planted with a lavish hand. The work was barely started when the city began to draw dividends from its investment; the tourist tide is interrupted only by war. The great sculptors of the early part of the century were David d'Angers, Barye and Rude. The latter made in his heroic group "The Departure," on the Arc de Triomphe, a national masterpiece, perhaps the greatest work ever done by a French sculptor. He was followed by his nephew, Frémiet—second only to Barye as an animalist—and by another fiery pupil, Carpeaux, who set all the new monuments of Paris awirl. Against this increasing agitation, this army of pedestaled dervishes, the serene art of Paul Dubois and Chapu made its digni-

fied protest. Other great names of this rich period were Barrias, Delaplanche, Falguière, Mercié, Saint-Marceaux and Dalou. Their monumental art was as a rule flamboyant and restless, but each of them left figures and occasional groups which were real contributions to the world's wealth of beauty.

Rodin was considered an insurgent but he was a trained craftsman. Many years of discipline as a journeyman sculptor took the place of the usual short term of academic training. His leadership was founded upon actual preeminence as a workman and, I am inclined to believe, upon certain agreeable limitations in design which made his art novel and entertaining to jaded appetites. He was not really a master of composition and seldom attempted it. It was the fragmentary nature of his work which fascinated the world. With his success came the inevitable imitation. Not recognizing the profound scholarship underneath the master's sketchy studies, the little fellows tried to achieve the same results by short cuts, and soon all Paris was turning out Rodinesque "pretzels." Finally the master himself began to nod and the world was ready for a new leader. The last few years have brought another peaceful revolution in French sculpture. Many of the younger men have been studying the simple, massive art of the cathedral builders. The Paris limestone has begun again to blossom and to bear fruit.

Some of the best things being done today are carved in this long neglected material. Just now the archaistic fever is well-nigh universal; buttonhole eyes; macaroni hair; washboard drapery—all are *de rigueur* in up-to-date galleries of sculpture. But in spite of this wave of childish imitation there has been in some respects a notable advance. The realism that threatened to convert sculpture into “taxidermy” has disappeared; likewise the explosive composition and the ragged silhouette of the nineteenth century. The monuments of today look like monuments, and not like flapping windmills. Mass is once more considered and despite an affectation of naïveté which has become amusingly academic, there is a return to the fundamental principles of good sculpture. All of which you may understand if you read some of the books recommended and look often at their illustrations.

WHAT TO READ

As has been suggested it is a question where to begin these adventures; shall we start out at the historical source and study, as one would in a college class, the unfolding of this noble art? Obviously such is the logical program for a student of history, but life is not lived in that way and some may well find it more interesting to begin with the known and the familiar, with Saint-Gaudens’ “Lincoln” or French’s “Angel of Death and the Young Sculptor,” and pro-

gress backward from this sure ground into the vast starry unknown where we may even meet the impetuous lady of our cover design! For the look of things, we shall offer our list in orderly historical sequence, but, at risk of shocking the professors, who would doubtless have you begin with prehistoric sculpture, or at least with Egyptian carvings, I suggest that those who have given the subject no thought at all start in near home. In spite of the fact that we consider ourselves cosmopolitan, Egyptian gods do remain slightly exotic! Perhaps we may get the atmosphere of this most ancient and venerable art by means of a little journey around the corner. Just as a visit to a studio sometimes awakens unsuspected talents, so a friendly meeting with a group of our best modern sculptors may arouse a latent interest in their art. A sympathetic writer is able to bring these men near to you; you cannot read of them without learning somewhat of their way of thinking. Hence we offer our list of books as a sort of anagram which can be read either way; if you are brave, begin at the top; if timid and doubtful, begin at the bottom.

THE MESSAGE OF
GREEK ART
By H. H. Powers

There have been many interpretations of Greek sculpture, all the way from Winckelmann to Waldstein. Every public library has a dozen "Outlines" on the subject. Lucy Mitchell wrote an entertaining *His-*

story of ancient sculpture fifty years ago, and authoritative works followed by Murray, Tarbell, and the Gardners, not to mention the wise Germans who supplied much of the "authority," and the many French writers who made it attractive. None of them, however, did the thrilling thing which Dr. Powers has been able to do. If you have time to read but one of our recommended volumes, make it *The message of Greek art*. It is an education in itself; you will never be the same afterwards! It is not hard reading, but even if it were it would repay all toil, for it treats understandingly one of the greatest themes in the world. Nothing more precious has come down to us from the past than those glowing fragments of marble and bronze; here you find the key to their significance. The book illuminates history and makes vivid our spiritual obligation to the amazing toilers of Greece, those bees of the Attic hive.

Henry Turner Bailey in his *Pleasure from pictures*, sends the reader first of all to Dr. Powers' *The art*

THE
ART OF FLORENCE
By H. H. Powers

of Florence, and calls the author a "master of interpretation who knows the galleries of Europe as a man knows his own private library." Those who have been reading in this book will recall that, quite properly, as much space is devoted to sculpture as to painting. Read now, or re-read, the pages on Florentine

sculpture and see how exciting it all is, how far removed from the usual cataloging of the historian of art. Dr. Powers' chapter on "the contribution of Pisa" is a masterpiece. His understanding of Ghiberti's art is profound. He recognizes Donatello's many-sided enthusiasm and immense influence, but neglects Luca della Robbia, another master, albeit in a restricted sphere. It is in the space devoted to Michelangelo that we find our guide at his best; his contribution to our understanding of that tragic life is infinitely valuable. He speaks as a seer and his winged words make most men's comments very dull reading.

ITALIAN SCULPTURE
OF THE RENAISSANCE
By L. J. Freeman

Nevertheless, there is another brief work on Italian sculpture which I can read with joy, even though my mind be filled with the glory of Dr. Powers' apocalyptic vision. This is L. J. Freeman's *Italian sculpture of the Renaissance*, a book whose every word is a delight, so exquisite is its rhythm, so dainty its swift glimpses of "Tuscan hills" and "yellow sunsets." Its power, however, is in its appreciation of the sculptural side of sculpture. It comes nearer to the artist's point of view than any other work written by a layman, yet has nothing of studio jargon, no tinge of professional cant. The scope of the work includes Della Quercia, one of the greatest, and the

chapter on Luca della Robbia is a masterly tribute. Most valuable of all, perhaps, is the introduction, "On the enjoyment of sculpture."

You will wish to look up various biographies referred to in these books.

MICHELANGELO

By Romain Rolland

The life of any eminent artist is profitable reading. The greatest of all masters upon whom we can focus modern eyes is Michelangelo, and many noble volumes have been devoted to him. Grimm, Symonds, and Holroyd have given us monumental records of his life and achievements. One of the most interesting as well as the latest is by Romain Rolland. The author dwells in his introduction upon the timidity and superstition of his subject, but proceeds to write an appreciative summary of the master's work. It may invite the reader to compare notes with other writers and thus to build up a clear picture of the giant of the Renaissance.

Somewhere along the way the reader will desire to consult a good general history of sculpture. There are several, but the

A HISTORY OF
SCULPTURE

By George Henry Chase
and Chandler Rathfon Post

latest, and in more than one respect the best, is the work recently done in collaboration by Professors George Henry Chase and Chandler Rathfon Post, both of Harvard University. This is an admirably

written volume of 582 pages, crowded full of information and well illustrated. There is no room for "purpling hills" and almost as little for personal enthusiasms, but these highest and latest of authorities will prove of great value for reference.

MODERN TENDENCIES
IN SCULPTURE

By Lorado Taft

The writer ventures to introduce one of his own works; a presentation which attempted to be "up-to-date" a short while back, but which does not welcome any too gladly certain of the manifestations of the present day. Perhaps it might be classified as conservative, although the author feels that there is progress all along the line. He attempts to discriminate between Rodin's masterpieces and his many meretricious productions. He rejoices in the recent reform in French monumental art and in new and worthy developments in various lands. He has a sincere admiration for our own great leader, Saint-Gaudens, and an affectionate regard for many of our contemporary American sculptors.

THE REMINISCENCES
OF AUGUSTUS
SAINT-GAUDENS

Edited by
Homer Saint-Gaudens

We are warned to recommend only works in single volumes, but here must be an exception. Saint-Gaudens, during his prolonged last illness, found solace in talking into a dictaphone the story of his life and extraordinary

career. His son, Homer Saint-Gaudens, now director of the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, edited and expanded these reminiscences into two good-sized volumes which offer as interesting reading as you are likely to find anywhere. The modesty and simplicity of the narrative remind one of the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant. You not only get close to the writer and feel that you are in his confidence, but you study the development of certain of the greatest ideas in American art. The evolution of the Shaw and the Adams memorials, the "Deacon Chapin" and the earlier "Lincoln" is pictured, not only in words, but by means of many photographs of the original studies. One who is attentive to illustrations as well as text comes speedily to realize the time and infinite pains which went into each of these important works.

FAMOUS SCULPTORS
OF AMERICA

By J. Walker McSpadden

Mr. McSpadden, a newspaper man, tells in simple, direct style the story of several of our best known

American sculptors, of their achievements and of his visits in their studios. He assures us that the book is not primarily a work of art criticism; "instead, its purpose is to make the casual reader acquainted with some of the men themselves, who have made the noteworthy pieces of sculpture which greet us in the public square or public building or adorn our museums." This he does in so sympathetic a fashion that one is

tempted to recommend the book as the initial step in a reading course, especially for those who are taking up the subject of sculpture for the first time. The chapters on Saint-Gaudens, French, MacMonnies, Bartlett, Barnard, and Fraser are particularly valuable.¹ The author really does make you acquainted with these men, and you will find them—as well as their work—worth knowing. They stand among the great Americans. An ample bibliography invites one into pleasant paths of research.

Have you read these books carefully and appreciatively? Have you a good memory? Then see what has happened. You have laid within your mind the foundations of a museum richer than the Louvre, grander than the Vatican. Its magnificent corridors are millenniums long. You can flit through the portals of the centuries like a bird, or you can tarry for days in the courts of Phidias, the rotunda of Augustus, or the sanctuary of Michelangelo. You can trace the development of a single country or with Alexander and conquering Cæsars cut athwart the nations of the earth. You watch the magic flowering of the French cathedrals and behold the Way of the Cross extends from sea to sea! From the cradle of

¹The reader who wishes further information on the subject is referred to Taft's ponderous *History of American sculpture*. Some claim to have read it through, but it is recommended only for reference.

the Renaissance comes an awakening throughout the civilized world. Everywhere in time and space you will find your treasures, yours for the taking. You will have enriched your days with a wealth that does not corrupt, which makes no enemies, which you can share without diminishing. You will have a new understanding of the profound thought of Spinoza: "I am certain that the good of human life cannot be in the possession of those things which for one man to possess is for the rest to lose, but rather in things which all can possess alike, and where each man's wealth promotes his neighbors'."

BOOKS RECOMMENDED IN THIS COURSE

630
7 THE MESSAGE OF GREEK ART *H. H. Powers*
Macmillan, 1913. \$3.00

370 ✓ THE ART OF FLORENCE *H. H. Powers*
Macmillan, 1912. \$3.00

ITALIAN SCULPTURE OF THE RENAISSANCE

615
76 *L. J. Freeman*

Macmillan, 1901. \$3.00

MICHELANGELO

Romain Rolland (tr. by Frederick Street)

Duffield, 1915. \$3.00

60
5 A HISTORY OF SCULPTURE

George Henry Chase and Chandler Rathfon Post

Harper, 1925. \$4.75

MODERN TENDENCIES IN SCULPTURE . . . *Lorado Taft*

Univ. of Chicago Press, 1921. \$5.00

THE REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS

Homer Saint-Gaudens, Ed.

Century, 1913. 2v. \$8.00

1236
13 FAMOUS SCULPTORS OF AMERICA

J. Walker McSpadden

Dodd, 1924. \$3.50

NOTE:—In this, as in other courses in the series, a book by the author of the course is included at the special request of the American Library Association.

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